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ABSTRACT

The Oklahoma Network of Continuing Higher Education project is described. A large Kellogg Foundation grant of $5 million will be used for the following seven modules with time frames from 3 to 5 years: leadership development, academic program identification and development, profession development, educational guidance and counseling for adults, telecommunications enhancement, coordination with public libraries, and interprofessional collaboration for health care delivery. Leadership development seminars will also be supported by grants from the two Oklahoma foundations: Noble Foundation of Ardmore and the Sarkeys Foundation of Norman. A facet of the network project includes an inventory of adult learner needs and of existing academic continuing higher education programs and establishment of 17 continuing higher education demonstration programs. Research and graduate education in the field of continuing higher education and computer-assisted guidance and counseling services for adults are components of the project. Four state telecommunications systems will be interconnected to provide college courses, seminars, and meetings statewide. Linking the seven modules to State System goals is also addressed. (SW)

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ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE

The Oklahoma Network of Continuing Higher Education:
An Essential Component of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education

Introduction

The one overarching purpose of the Oklahoma Network of Continuing Higher Education, and indeed for the State System of Higher Education, is to provide a relevant, high-quality educational opportunity to everyone, everywhere, every day in Oklahoma--access to excellence. A balance must exist between access and quality. While the State System goals provide for the widest possible access in range and choice of programs to Oklahoma citizens, it is equally necessary that the quality of programs and services be carefully nurtured and systematically upgraded. Indeed, access and quality can be viewed as the two sides of the same coin--linked by an inseparable constitution. In Oklahoma, access and quality will be enhanced through an integrated telecommunications network developed with state and foundation resources involving all educational providers--state and local--and allow these providers to utilize the resources of public libraries, Education Information Centers, cooperative extension offices, business and industry, local government offices, in reaching all Oklahoma citizens. The system will provide a full range of options including video, audio, telephony, facsimile, and data. Most educational needs presently known--training, collaboration between and among professionals, updating, certification, and self-instruction, to name a few--will be accommodated.

By 1990, higher education enrollments in the nation will see half of the student body beyond the age of 25, and half of the total enrollment will be part-time students. In addition, more students will be enrolled in noncredit courses than in regular degree programs. Now is the time to act.

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Today the pressures are mounting to make higher education more contributive to the diversification of the state's economic base; to make higher education programs more relevant to the needs of a student body which is markedly older, mostly part-time, increasingly female, with proportionately more minorities, and requiring the rapid incorporation of modern educational technologies while providing continuing access to the explosive expansion of knowledge. The need has never been greater in western civilization for access to higher education by everyone, everywhere, every day. People everywhere are attempting to cope with both the evil of ignorance and the frequently fatal curse of professional obsolescence. This is the basis for the development of the Oklahoma Network of Continuing Higher Education project.

Project Description

A grant, totaling more than $5.8 million, was awarded to the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan, March 21, 1985--the largest private gift to Oklahoma education in the history of the state--to be used to improve citizens' access to educational programs and to develop a statewide network of continuing education service for adults. The Noble Foundation of Ardmore and the Sarkeys Foundation of Norman awarded $300,000 each to match the funds granted by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to support the leadership development module of the project.

The 1985 Oklahoma Legislature provided a separate appropriation in Section 9 of House Bill No. 1062 to the State Regents for $2 million to provide matching funds for the Kellogg Foundation grant, specifically the grant module relating to the enhancement of the State Regents' existing microwave system.

For Oklahoma to be able to meet this challenge of the future, new approaches to educational delivery must be devised using the latest technology, best-trained faculty and administrators, and the most efficient practices possible. That is the objective of the foundation-aided initiatives.

The Kellogg grant to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) of $4,991,993 involves seven different modules with time frames ranging from three to five years. The modules are: (1) leadership development; (2) academic program identification and development; (3) profession development; (4) educational guidance and counseling for adults; (5) telecommunications enhancement; (6) coordination with public libraries; and, (7) interprofessional collaboration.

The leadership development module calls for seminars to be led by nationally recognized figures. Two Oklahoma foundations, The Noble Foundation of Ardmore and the Sarkeys Foundation of Norman, awarded $300,000 each to match the funds granted by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation for these leadership development seminars. The leadership development seminar series is not intended to replace faculty and staff development programs on many campuses, but to enhance and enrich the existing leadership development activities. The seminars will focus on such topics as institutional planning, roles of governing boards, administrative organization, and institutional policies for continuing education and outreach services. These topics will be expanded within the context of the major concerns in the years ahead. These themes will include such issues as understanding our changing students, the implications of the expanding knowledge base, the imperatives accompanying socio-economic changes and the meanings for higher education of the new educational technologies. Approximately 200 regents and college trustees will be involved, along with 250 college presidents and administrators, and 600 faculty leaders representing both public and private higher education throughout Oklahoma.

The proposal's second component will develop an inventory of adult learner needs and of existing academic continuing higher education programs. When the inventory is complete, 17 continuing higher education demonstration programs will be established. Results of these programs will be used to guide institutional practices and OSRHE policy. The program inventory will be developed by a combination of surveys and

professional position papers. Questionnaires will be distributed to Oklahomans in the following categories: employers, community leaders, ethnic groups, adults with special needs, academic leaders, women, and the general public. A different approach has been chosen for the study of the needs of practicing professionals in 25 disciplines and the agricultural industry. "State-of-the-art" or "best-thinking" position papers will be prepared by a selected group of academic authorities and practicing professionals within the 25 professions and agricultural industry. From these papers, a consensus summary will be drawn representing a blueprint for planning academic program delivery to meet continuing education needs.

The project's third component encourages research and graduate education in the field of continuing higher education. Attention will center on helping Oklahoma develop an adequate supply of educators trained in continuing higher education principles and practices.

The educational guidance and counseling component of the project will add computer-assisted guidance and counseling services for adults to the already existing Educational Information Centers (EIC's) and selected public libraries. The OSRHE also will study institutional practices of awarding credit for experiential learning. Presently the OSRHE provides a Counselor's Guide with information on financial aid available in Oklahoma.

The most ambitious component of the project is the expansion of the state's telecommunications systems. The plan is to link, for continuing higher education purposes, the State Regents' Televised Instruction System (Talkback TV), the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority, the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center studio, and the Oklahoma State University Educational Television Service. The interconnection of facilities, through closed-circuit microwave television, broadcast television and satellite transmission, will allow the OSRHE to provide college courses, seminars, workshops, and meetings statewide with the potential for national

distribution. The variety and scope of the new services made possible by these linkages will go well beyond anything now available in Oklahoma. It has been estimated that the cost savings to institutions from such linkages will amount to as much as $1.2 million in the system's first year of operation.

A further aspect of the project is to strengthen the services public libraries give to adults. Initially, twelve selected public libraries will increase their counseling and advising for adults who need continuing higher education programs. Training will be given to librarians for their expanded role. A long-range goal would be to provide training statewide to Oklahoma's 200 public libraries. It will be possible at a future date for all participating libraries to be connected electronically, as well as to the state library, collegiate libraries, collegiate departments of continuing education, and the statewide network of Educational Information Centers.

The project's seventh component will establish a prototype of interprofessional education. This will bring together the various professions and fields connected with the delivery of health care. For example, professional education programs will be developed that involve not only physicians but nurses, therapists, dietitians, pharmacists, social workers, ministers, insurance companies, morticians, and hospital administrators. These types of programs will help to improve the performance of health practitioners and, as an end result, will improve the health status of the people of Oklahoma.

Included in the $5.8 million awarded is a separate but related project targeted at assisting the Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service complete its statewide telecommunications network, while training faculty and staff in use of the communication technologies. This effort is spearheaded by Oklahoma State University (OSU) with $874,000 from the Kellogg Foundation. It builds on the telecommunications network to be put in place by OSRHE and should greatly improve access to educational programming for agriculturalists and rural Oklahoma families.

Grant monies also will be used to help purchase an audio bridging system to allow all of Oklahoma's Cooperative Extension offices to do audio teleconferencing; 15 portable receive-only earth stations to provide teleconferencing capabilities from the in-state satellite uplink and from out-of-state locations; and equipment for improved transmission and reception capability at OSU's telecommunications center.

Faculty and staff will be involved in producing a minimum of 51 educational programs using the integrated telecommunications network over a three-year period. Individuals will be taught to more effectively use the new technologies as emphasis is placed on faculty and staff development. Educational programming will cover such topics as production, management, marketing, and financial planning for farmers and ranchers.

In the awarding of the two grants, Dr. Russell G. Mawby, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer for the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, said: "Oklahoma's reputation for providing adults with expanded knowledge, understanding, and skills through quality education programs is well documented. We believe these grants will enable the State System to build on its experience to develop a comprehensive educational network of adult continuing education services that can serve as a model for other states in the nation."

State System Goals: The Vital Link

For the Oklahoma Network to make a lasting, positive contribution to the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education, its purposes and the seven modules must be vitally linked to State System goals. The one overarching purpose of the network and indeed for the State System is to provide a relevant, high-quality educational opportunity to everyone, everywhere, every day in Oklahoma -- access to excellence. All seven modules, directly or indirectly focus upon that challenge.

The goals and objectives utilized by the State Regents to measure planning accomplishments since 1980 are (1) those contained in the 1980 publication Oklahoma

Higher Education: Planning for the 1980's, the result of considerable professional expertise and broad input formed through citizen consensus and (2) those derived from the annual "Plan of Work" prepared by the Chancellor and staff, and approved by the State Regents.

A major State System goal early identified and often repeated states Oklahoma should provide for its citizens the widest possible range of access and choice to institutions and programs in Oklahoma higher education.

This goal commitment is reinforced and deepened through the social justice policy adopted by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in 1982, and is stated as follows:

> To make possible the participation of all able persons at the highest attainable level of academic life regardless of their race, ethnic background, sex, age, religion, handicap, income level, or geographic location; and to provide for social justice in the form of equitable and fair treatment and for systematic adjustments in the form of positive action until equity is attained.

The only way to accomplish these State System goals and the major, overarching purpose of the Oklahoma Network is to utilize all of the institutions, centers, and teaching methodologies available within the higher education community. It will of necessity incorporate public libraries and cooperative extension offices as local learning centers, as well as community facilities of all kinds throughout the state.

Three more specific purposes were identified for the Oklahoma Network to be realized through the completion of certain modules, the first being -- to integrate continuing higher education into the academic mainstream. A second major State System goal which relates to this purpose and is imperative if access to excellence is to be achieved is stated thusly: The quality of educational programs and services of institutions in Oklahoma higher education should be carefully nurtured and systematically

upgraded. For continuing higher education programs and services to be of high quality, they must come from the academic mainstream. This integration will be promoted as the board members and trustees, college presidents and administrators, and faculty leaders experience first hand the importance of continuing education and are exposed to the best minds in various areas of interest, especially those able to translate educational outreach practices and policies into the academic and administrative framework (Leadership Development Module).

One major step in the process of integrating is already well under way. Continuing higher education credit activities are being reported through the State Regents Unitized Data System with plans to also include at an early date the reporting of educational noncredit activities.

By developing a program inventory of adult learner needs and translating this data into program selection and formation of demonstration programs, this integration and quality can be fostered (Program Development Module).

The creation of a model research and graduate continuing higher education center for the education of new and existing faculty in the field (in this case providing stipends for Kellogg Associates), while generating rigorous research results can serve to accomplish this purpose and goal, as can the bringing together of members of each of several professional groups, e.g. those providing health care, to improve performance and thus the health care of citizens in general. (Profession Development and Interprofessional Development Modules).

The Profession Development Module provides for, among other things, an orientation of faculty who may teach in various disciplines other than continuing education. They will be spokespersons for continuing education within the disciplines and department structures at various colleges and universities. Also, by producing and disseminating more rigorous research studies, a greater respect for practitioners of continuing education will be achieved while upgrading quality of programs and services.

The second purpose of the network -- to strengthen the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education through new opportunities for interinstitutional cooperation and collaboration is in line with the State System goal stated -- Oklahoma colleges and universities should join with business, industry, and government in a partnership arrangement to further the economic and social development of the state.

The linkages between and among colleges and universities made possible through the telecommunications enhancement and interprofessional development modules utilizing various professional schools' faculty along with other institutional resources should directly address this purpose and goal. The public library interconnection will allow the sharing of books and materials -- each participating library, in effect, will have access to collections maintained by each of the other participating libraries -- which will be very cost-effective. The linkage of the comprehensive universities with industry will add to the resource and research base of each -- a real potential breakthrough toward economic development in Oklahoma.

The bottom line is that all seven modules support the concept and practice of collaboration which can only assist every facet of state activities whether social, economic, educational, or cultural.

The third purpose of the network -- to develop a cost-effective network of continuing higher education services as an integral part of the State System -- and the State System goal -- Oklahoma higher education should make the most efficient use possible of the resources provided by the people and the Oklahoma Legislature -- is most perfectly realized through the enhancement of the Oklahoma Televised Instruction System (Talkback Television) created by the Oklahoma Legislature in 1970, and subsequently operated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. This enhancement will greatly expand the services provided to include telephone services, data transmission, facsimile, and increase the options for televised instruction with access to satellite, public broadcast, and a state-of-the-art production studio facility.

Added services at less cost without sacrificing quality is the meaning of efficiency. (Telecommunications Enhancement Module). Both the Guidance and Counseling and Library Collaboration modules realize statewide access on the part of citizens through the enhanced telecommunications module.

The overarching purpose of the network and the major access goal of the State System can only be achieved in some direct manner to the degree that the Guidance and Counseling and Library Collaboration modules are realized, for it is at this level that the linkages with citizens are most readily available. From these initial contacts the "world of learning" becomes real and accessible -- the keys to all higher educational resources provided.